

Augusta Fire Service Area

PO Box 556
Augusta, MT 59410

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LEWIS & CLARK COUNTY
Community Development & Planning

January 31, 2012

To the Lewis and Clark County Commissioners,

The Augusta Fire Service Area Board of Trustees met on January 30, 2012 for the purpose of discussing our annual business and establishing our budget needs. At this meeting all Trustees were present and the Trustees voted unanimously to lower the current rates by 25%. The Augusta Fire Service Area was established in 2003. When the Augusta Fire Service Area was established, there was no real analysis done as to the level of funding required to adequately protect and serve our constituents. Eight years ago the Augusta Fire District, Augusta Volunteer Fire Department and the Augusta Fire Service Area entered into a contract to provide fire protection to the Augusta Fire District and the Augusta Fire Service Area. This has proven to be a great partnership whose combined resources have built one of the best rural fire departments in the state. We have extended that partnership to include the Augusta Ambulance Service to further our efficiency in providing good fire and EMS services to Augusta and the surrounding areas.

The Augusta Fire Service Area pays an annual fee of \$12,000 to the Volunteer Fire Department for their services. We had started a new building about ten years ago. There was a great deal of work that needed to be completed when the Service Area was established. We took out an \$80,000 loan for the building and we paid the loan off in February of 2011. The department is well equipped and maintained. The Volunteer Fire Department is more than adequately funded. Their cash balance is strong and grows each year. The Volunteer Fire Department is responsible for all maintenance and operating costs. The current fleet has been modernized and we currently have three pumper trucks, five brush trucks, and two tenders. The ambulance is approximately 3 years old and very well equipped. We have an additional 2011 Suburban, owned by the Ambulance Service to assist on vehicle accidents, training, incident command and medical assists by the fire dept. The Fire District is currently working to upgrade the pumper trucks with a new truck within the year. All firemen have up to date protective equipment and a good training program is in place. We have done all of this and continue to grow reserves.

In our initial meetings to develop the Service Area we told concerned taxpayers that if we could lower rates to more reasonable levels and still provide good protection, we would. With the debt for the building paid off, and approximately \$16,500 in our account, the Trustees feel it would be wrong to continue to collect more revenue than what is required to meet our annual needs and continue to grow our reserves at a more modest rate.

We are requesting a 25% reduction in fees to be assessed to the Augusta Fire Service Area. This would take our annual revenue from approximately \$20,600 to approximately \$15,500 per year. This would continue to grow our reserve by \$3,500 per year. With the established partnership, this is more than adequate to meet our needs for a number of years to come.

The following chart was developed by Carrie Severson, the Lewis and Clark Co. Special Districts Coordinator. It clearly shows the current rates and what we desire the new rates to be.

Taxable Value of Improvement Range	Proposed Assessment Worksheet	Current Assessment
\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
\$1-\$299	\$18.75	\$25.00
\$300-\$599	\$37.50	\$50.00
\$600-\$999	\$56.25	\$75.00
\$1000-\$1499	\$75.00	\$100.00
\$1500-\$1999	\$93.75	\$125.00
\$2000-\$3999	\$112.50	\$150.00
\$4000+	\$150.00	\$200.00
Exempt	\$75.00	\$100.00
Totals	\$15,468.75	\$20,625.00

The Board of Trustees for the Augusta Fire Service Area appreciates your attention to this matter and would like to see this reduction in place when our constituents receive their tax statements in the fall of 2012.

Sincerely,



Joseph Barrett
Chairman - Augusta Fire Service Area
(406) 562-3584